



## 5 Things to Know Before Hiring Your Contractor

### 1. Is the Contractor licensed, bonded and insured? What is the license number?

Hiring an unlicensed contractor carries numerous risks, one of which is a lack of recourse if something goes wrong. Professional contractors are licensed, bonded and insured. Contractors are licensed by the State of Washington Labor & Industries. If something goes wrong on your job, you have the option to file a complaint with Labor and Industries. Valid complaints can result in fines, suspensions, or loss of license to the offending contractor. An unlicensed contractor has nothing to lose, and therefore, no recourse for you. Washington state law requires employers to have workers compensation insurance. If a worker gets hurt on your job and there is no workers compensation in place, you may be held liable. And lastly, contractors should have a minimum \$1,000,000 general liability insurance policy in place.

Click here: [Look Up Contractors or Tradespeople](#)

**Heritage Builders' Answer:** Heritage Builders NW, LLC is licensed, bonded and insured. Our license number is HERITBN906RC, we carry a \$12,000 bond and are covered for \$2,000,000 in general liability.

### 2. How long has the company been in business?

You want to know that if there is a problem with your job that your Contractor will be around to fix it. Companies that have been around for 5 or more years, are likely to be around next year.

**Heritage Builders' Answer:** We started as Puget Sound General Contracting in April 1998. In February 2010, we renamed the business to Heritage Builders NW to better reflect our services and business.

### 3. Does the Contractor have references for recent work?

Ask the Contractor for references for work similar to your project. Referrals for recent work are great because the project is fresh in the client's mind, but older referrals are important too, to see the Contractor's long-term standing with the client and the long-term quality of work. Also, ask to visit on-going jobs. Take note of the job-site conditions, quality of work, and talk to the client. Many are happy to share their experience in the midst of the project.

#### Questions to ask previous clients

- Were you happy with the Contractor and were they easy to work with?
- Was the jobsite kept clean during construction?
- How would you grade the quality of work?
- Was the contractor readily assessable and did they respond to problems as they arose in a timely manner?
- Did the contractor willingly make any necessary corrections?
- Did the workers show up regularly and was there adequate supervision?
- Did the project stay on schedule? If not, what caused the schedule to change?
- Did the project come in at the cost stated on the contract? If not, what caused the cost to change?



- Would you recommend the Contractor and would you use them again?
- Was the Contractor prompt in completing the final punch list items?

**Heritage Builders' Answer:** Our clients are happy to share their experience and their homes to prospective clients. We regularly provide a walk-thru of on-going jobs and can provide names, project description, photos and contact information for references.

#### 4. Are all your bids detailed and comparable?

What may appear to be the lowest and most competitive bid may turn out to be the highest in the end. Be sure to compare what is included in the budget, allowances, types of products, and detail specifications budgeted for the allowances.

**Heritage Builders' Answer:** We put together a detailed Scope of Work detailing all aspects of the job, as well as a line-item budget. This process helps us ensure that we have accounted for the known details and that we have put together a complete budget. It also helps eliminates grey areas if the scope changes or the plans were incomplete.

#### 5. How do you feel about the Contractors you are interviewing?

You are going to be spending a lot of time with your contractor, and making important decisions with them. Do you feel comfortable with their personality, background, methods and communication skills? Is everyone clear about the project and the Scope of Work? A contractor with whom you can communicate and trust is just as important as hiring a credible contractor.